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## M. FROIDEVAUX'S PARIS LETTER.

PARIS, January 17, 1901.

If, in studying the different official geographical institutions of France, it is not absolutely indispensable to follow a strict chronological order, the case is very different with regard to private institutions. In fact, all our geographical societies have been modelled upon the oldest of all—the Société de Géographie, of Paris, the most ancient in the world. It is of this Society that I propose first to speak.

Its establishment dates from the year 1821, but it would be an error to conclude that the question of founding a geographical society in France had not previously suggested itself. It was in 1785 that an anonymous writer—who was, perhaps, the geographer J. N. Buache—submitted to the approbation of one of the Ministers of Louis XVI. a complete plan for constituting an association intended to *carry the science of geography to its utmost possible perfection*.

The King, whose interest in geography is well known, might possibly have looked with favour upon the plan for the creation of this company (which seems to have been a kind of geographical academy) if it had been laid before him; but, to the great detriment of French cartography, the project never became vital.

A few years later, soon after the period of The Terror, there was founded in Paris a *Société de l'Afrique Intérieure*, after the manner of the *African Society*, formed in London in 1788. The astronomer Jérôme Lalande, author of a memoir, famous in its day, on the interior of Africa, and a persistent propagandist of all enterprises directed towards the Dark Continent, seems to have been the founder of the new Society, which was joined immediately by the distinguished traveller Le Vaillant, by Bougainville and Baudin. Little is known of its transactions; but the Society was still in existence in the year IX, when it gave a banquet to Baudin, who was making preparations for the voyage to Australia to which he owes his reputation.

Afterwards removed to Marseilles, the Society published a body of rules which shows that it was engaged in creating a complete scientific organization, like those of the modern geographical societies: public meetings with lectures, award of prizes, publication of memoirs and library—nothing is wanting; it was even pro-

posed to form a natural history collection, probably with the objects brought back from Africa by travellers commissioned by the Society. But all these projects came to naught, all trace of the Society is lost after the 9th of August, 1802, and if it survived for a time it was without attracting attention or carrying out any of its plans.

The Société de Géographie was founded in 1821 by "several persons earnestly desirous of contributing by their united efforts to the progress of geography." Among the first associates were Conrad Malte-Brun, Jomard, Barbié du Bocage, Letronne, and others, and the first president of the Society was the illustrious Laplace. After having founded prizes, created a publication, the *Bulletin* (which was issued without a break from the month of June, 1822, to the close of the year 1900), and established the publicity and the regularity of its meetings, this oldest of all geographical associations entered upon its existence and labored with all its power, while closely following the advance in our knowledge of the globe, to cultivate in France the taste and the study of geography. I propose to explain in my next letter the present working and the organization of the Société de Géographie.

On the 5th of December, 1900, the Société received, at the Sorbonne, the members of the Saharan Mission which, under the prudent and skilful direction of M. F. Foureau and the regretted Comm. Lamy, established communication between Algeria and the French Congo. Crampel, in 1890, had laid down the great lines of the plan followed out by the Gentil expedition from the Congo to the Tchad in 1897, and by that of the Saharan Mission to the same great lake.

M. Foureau was singularly well fitted to accomplish his difficult task. In 1876 he explored the Sahara, carefully studying the region south of Algeria and remaining for a time in the Oued-Rirh, and accomplishing in the south, from the year 1883, nine successive expeditions for the Ministry of Public Instruction, all fruitful in scientific results, geographical surveys, astronomical and meteorological observations, and collections of all kinds. When he set out in 1898, on his last expedition, his journeys amounted to a total of 21,000 kilometers, 9,000 of which were in new regions. Of these 21,000 kilometers two-thirds had been surveyed on a scale of 1:100,000, and 500 points had been established by determinations of longitude and latitude. Not content with the physical examination of the regions traversed, M. Foureau had studied the inhabitants, their state of mind and their manners and language, so as to acquire a real ascendancy over them. Such efforts were worthy of

recompense. After having been baffled for several years by the obstinate ill-will of the Touaregs, and recognizing that the only certain way of succeeding in a great exploration of the Sahara was to do without the natives and to travel with an escort of 150 faithful men, well disciplined and well armed, M. Foureau found at last his Mæcenas, and was able to carry out his long-cherished design.

The difficulties encountered from October, 1898, to April, 1900, when he met M. Gentil at Mandjafa, were related by M. Foureau to the Société in a style full of colour and charm, and may be read in the December number of *La Géographie*. The scientific details will be published at a later day; it is enough now to mention that M. Foureau determined the principal points of his march by 512 astronomical observations. Geology, botany, ethnography—nothing was overlooked by him; but passing over his collections, the Minister of Public Instruction congratulated M. Foureau that he had shown himself throughout his journeys heroic without ceasing to be humane.

At a later session of the Société, M. Bonnel de Mézières rendered an account of his expedition to the Upper Ubangi, the M'Bomu and the Bahr-el-Ghazal, with results fruitful for science as well as for commerce.

In another part of Africa, Capt. Woelffel, in 1899, filled up a blank previously existing on the map in the countries of the Sudan between 9° and 6° 40' N. Lat. and 7° and 9° W. Lon. M. Chesneau, in a note published in *La Géographie*, shows that M. Woelffel explored the country which constitutes the water-shed between the basin of the Niger and the smaller basins along the coast of the Atlantic. This is much the most elevated and the most broken region of the whole Sudan.

In Asia M. Grenard is exploring the little-known country within his consular district. From his residence of Sivas he made in the autumn of 1900 a journey beyond the Euphrates, visited the Kurds, and brought back numerous corrections for the existing defective maps of that region.

M. Bonin, already known by his explorations in China, has not yet published the results of his last journey, but his address before the Société in January establishes the value of his work. He has recently contributed to the *Revue Coloniale* a "Note on the Navigability of the Yellow River." There is, it appears, no insurmountable obstacle to the navigation of the Hoang-Ho.

The holidays produced some works interesting to geographers. One, *Notre Épopée Coloniale*, by M. P. Legendre, traces the history

of French colonization from the earliest times—that is to say, from the period when the Normans ventured as far as Guinea, in Western Africa, from the time when Jean de Béthencourt colonized the Canaries—to the end of the XIXth century. This work is historical as well as geographical, but the book published by Father Piolet on Madagascar is exclusively geographical. Father Piolet has lately visited the great island, to which he had already devoted several works. The present volume is the first of a superb collection on the *Empire Colonial de la France*, to be written by contributors of indisputable authority. The artistic part of this handsome series will be under the charge of M. Gervais Courtellemont. A companion work to that of Father Piolet is the *Voyage du Général Gallieni autour de Madagascar*, edited by an officer on the staff of the Governor-General.

More and more our geographical literature tends to become colonial. In this place particular mention is due to Father Piolet's book, entitled *La France hors de France*, which contains not only an excellent study of demography (wherein the author proves that, if the Frenchmen emigrate very little, there exists none the less in France a very considerable number of men fit for emigration and who ought to emigrate), but also a very serious study of economical geography on our best colonies—Algeria, Tunisia, Madagascar, New Caledonia. It is to these, says Father Piolet, that our emigrants should, above all, betake themselves. This part of *La France hors de France* forms in some respects a pendant to the excellent work recently published in London by Mr. Hugh Robert Mill, under the title of *New Lands: their Resources and Prospective Advantages*.

The work in which M. Charles Michel has just related the fruitless march of the expedition to which he belonged to meet Marchand recommends itself by other qualities. It is a very detailed and lively account of the journey towards Fashoda from Jibuti to the confluence of the Sobat and the Juba; it contains also the account of the excursion performed by the regretted Maurice Potter and by M. Faivre de Goré as far as the White Nile, an excellent study of the Abyssinians, and a remarkable statement of some of the causes which brought about the failure of the French projects on the Nile. Scientific appendices and reproductions of photographs and drawings add to the value of this volume.

Another remarkable work is that of Father Lambert on the *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*. Father Lambert has studied curiously and with patience the life of the strange people among whom he has lived since the year 1856. His observations

on the Bélep tribe, which inhabits the north, and the natives of the Isle of Pines, have led him to the conclusion that the manners of the peoples of the north and of the south of New Caledonia are practically identical. It would be well if there existed, on the people of each one of our colonies, a work as carefully executed as this of Father Lambert, which has but one weakness—its engravings are a little primitive in style.

I may mention also the book in which M. A. Foucher describes his two years' travel in an interesting Asiatic region—*La Frontière Indo-Afghane* ; and another, *Voyages en Patagonie*, written by M. Henri de la Vaulx, recounting his adventures in Patagonia, where he collected the precious anthropological and ethnographical objects now in the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle and in the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro.

HENRI FROIDEVAUX.